

Fit for purpose or simply flabby? The need for alternative forms of assessment for enterprise education in England

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The phrase 'assessment must be fit for purpose' frequently appears in relation to national standards, qualifications, and requirements for reliability of assessments. The nature and meaning of the purposes of assessment are not always clear to users and in any case are constantly evolving in line with changing expectations and needs. Particular difficulties exist in relation to locally generated forms of enterprise education. Research shows that, beyond secure Maths and English, employer expectations constellate around behaviours and attitudes. At the heart of such expectations are qualities of enterprise and employability. This paper describes current developments in enterprise education and its assessment for nationally recognised awards in England and considers questions of authenticity, reliability, and purpose. The functions of assessment in enterprise education are discussed and applications of connoisseurship and performance mastery in enabling local initiatives to meet national standards considered and reported on in the context of two questions. Can the current public examination system in the United Kingdom adapt to reflect employer expectations and reliably award performance in terms of behaviours and attitudes? Can the public pressure for certainty (e.g. no more coursework, more traditional exams) be accommodated within a valid enterprise awarding process that addresses behaviours and attitudes?